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GENERAL NOTES.

GEOGRAPHY AND TRAVELS.¹

AFRICA.—*Kilima-njaro*.—The account given by Mr. H. H. Johnston, before the Royal Geographical Society, of his stay at Kilima-njaro, adds more to our knowledge of the zoölogy and botany of the southern slopes of this great mountain than to its geography. The vegetation is luxuriant, trees ascend to nine or ten thousand feet, herbaceous vegetation is abundant up to 13,000 feet, and heaths and some shrubs linger to above 14,000 feet. The buffalo, koodoo and elephant appear to ascend even to the snow-line. Mr. Johnston saw the footprints of buffaloes at 14,000 feet, and came in sight of three elephants at 13,000 feet. A hyrax ascends to 11,000 feet. In the discussion which followed, Mr. Thomson described Kilima-njaro as an enormous mountain mass, some sixty miles long by thirty wide, upon the summit of which the great dome of Kibô and the peak of Kimawenzi were comparatively small excrescences. On the southern side the country of Chaga was formed of a series of terraces of fertile land, but on the northern side the mountain rose at an even angle from 3000 to 18,000 feet without a break by ridge or valley.

The Egyptian Sudan.—Colonel H. G. Prout, an American engineer, formerly under the employ of General Stone, has contributed to the *Engineering News* an account of the route from Suakin to Berber. This is of interest geographically from the light it throws upon the nature of the country, which from immediately behind Suakin to Wady Ariab, 118 miles from that place, is mountainous, the projected road passing, at about sixty miles from Suakin, through a defile 3000 feet above the sea. The map recently compiled from data furnished by the office of Naval Intelligence, shows this route, as well as those between Massowah and Kassala, and Korosko and Abn Ahmed. Gen. C. P. Stone contributes to *Science* an account of the climate of various parts of the vast region known as the Egyptian Sudan. From November to February inclusive, the province of Dongola is healthy, but in the spring months the heat is excessive, dust storms violent, and fever prevalent. The moist winds of early autumn increase the unhealthiness. At Suakin, the intense heat is the chief foe to health; but the province of Taka (capital, Kassala) and the district of Gallabat have, from June to October, a climate which is deadly to Europeans. At that season the rains are copious, and mingling with the floods of water coming down from the mountains of Abyssinia, cause the rich soil to become like a saturated sponge. Even the natives, in many districts, abandon the country from May to October, and reside in the desert.

¹ This department is edited by W. N. LOCKINGTON, Philadelphia.

ASIA.—*The Lower Helmund*.—The valley of the Helmund, at the point where it was struck by the Afghan boundary commission, below its junction with the Argandab, is narrow and limited by ranges of rolling clay or sandstone hills. Beyond these ridges rise other similar ridges, forming the *dashts*, or rolling plateaux of Southern Afghanistan. This desolate country is full of ruins. "From Lundi to Kala Fateh," writes Major Holdich, "one rides through and over the relics of dead kingdoms. The remains of forts, of deep-cut irrigation canals, of pretentious habitations which might have been palaces * * * are the common features of the landscape. Broken pottery strews the ground sometimes for miles at a time." All are built of mud or sun-dried bricks. During the whole of its lower course until it disappears in a hamun or swamp, it receives no tributaries. About Nadali are innumerable mounds, some of which, though always bearing ruins on their summit, are clearly stratified, and are therefore thought to be natural.

Discovery of the Sources of the Hoang-Ho.—The proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society for March contain translations of two letters sent by Col. Prejevalsky to the *Invalide Russe*. This intrepid traveler left Urga (a town in Northern Mongolia, situated on a branch of the Angora and south of the Irkutsk) on Nov. 8, 1883, and soon reached the vast desert of Gobi, which measures 2650 miles from east to west, and about 700 from north to south. The northern part of the desert is still a steppe region covered with excellent grass; but Central Gobi consists of perfectly bare flat spaces covered with pebbles and cut up at intervals by lone stratified ridges, while Southern Gobi is covered all over with quicksands, the remains of shoals and dunes of the once wide Central Asian sea. Terrible frosts in winter, without snow, and almost tropical heat in summer, with frequent storms, characterize this barren, rainless, riverless region; yet every part of it is inhabited by Mongols. Crossing the Khurkhu ridge, forming the eastern edge of the Altai, the southern desert, or Alashan, was entered, and a stay was made at Din-yuan-in, where the Alashan range runs like a wall between the desert and the cultivated banks of the northern bend of the Yellow river. Crossing the Nan-shan range, part of the unbroken wall which stretches from the Upper Hoang-ho to the Pamir, Col. Prejevalsky then entered Kan-su, and prepared to go in search of the hitherto undiscovered sources of the Hoang-ho. On his way he passed the plateau of Lake Koko-Nor, 10,800 feet above the sea; and then crossed the ridge of Burkhan-Buddha by a pass 15,700 feet above the sea. The circumference of Lake Koko-Nor is given as $166\frac{2}{3}$ miles. Sixty-seven miles from the pass the sources of the Yellow river were reached. Two streamlets, flowing from the south and west, out of the mountains scattered about the plateau, unite at an elevation of 13,600 feet. The infant river is fed by the numerous springs

of the wide marshy valley (40 miles by $13\frac{1}{2}$) of Odontala, or, as the Chinese call it, Sing-su-hai, or Starry sea. After a course of about fourteen miles, the river falls into a lake, the southern shores of which it colors with its muddy waters, then pouring out of it to the east it soon enters another lake, which it leaves a considerable river; further on, after making a sharp turn around the snow-covered ridge of Amne-machin, its mad current tears through the cross strata of the Kuen-lun and flows toward China proper. After this our traveler went southward, but was stopped by the unfordable Blue river, or Di-che (Yang-tsze), and returning northward, made his way to Zaidam, after two serious encounters with Tangutan robbers.

Asiatic Notes.—M. Donbrof has explored the upper course of the Selenka, and reached the hitherto unvisited source of this great tributary of Lake Baikal.—According to Mr. Gowland, who has recently crossed the central range of Corea during a journey from Sôul to Fusan, there are in this part of the peninsula no mountains above about 4000 feet in height, no characteristic volcanic cones, and no indications of mineral wealth. The resources of the country appear to lie entirely in agriculture.—M. Jos. Martin has arrived in Japan after a most arduous journey from the Lena to the Amoor, across the Stanovoi range of mountains.—Dr. Gustave Le Bon is traveling in Nepal. He is said to be the first European who has been permitted to travel through that country.

AUSTRALASIA.—The North Coast of New Guinea.—Mr. Robidé van der Aa has recently published an account of two voyages to the north coast of New Guinea. In the first, the Mapia group of islands was visited, and the voyagers afterwards landed on Jamma, an island in Walckenaer bay, and a depot for the cocoanut fiber of the main land. About twenty-five miles south-east of Jamma is the mouth of a river, the Witriwaai, not found on any map. This was ascended to a large lagoon. About eight miles to the east is the Wiriwaai, with a strong current discoloring the water far out to sea. Sadipi bay, nearly a degree further east, is a deep and safe harbor. The houses here have at each gable end a pent-house roof, which comes so low that a hole is made to enable the occupants to crawl in. On the second voyage, the Amberno river was ascended for over sixty miles, when it shoaled, with a current of four and a half miles an hour. Mr. van der Aa argues from the size of this river (it is eight hundred yards wide) that it has a long course from the interior, cutting its way through the Rees mountains. Thus its upper waters may be navigable.—Dr. R. von Lendenfeld has found that Mount Kosciusko is not the highest of the Australian alps. He has ascended a higher peak at some distance farther south. This is 7256 feet high, while Mount Kosciusko has been measured at from 7171 to 7176

feet. The newly enthroned peak is named Mount Clarke. The upper limit of trees upon it is 5900 feet. Above 6500 feet patches of snow are found on the lee side of the main range, at 6500 feet.

AMERICA.—*Science* states that several expeditions to Alaska are projected during the coming season. Gen. Miles, who commands in the military district, desires to acquire a knowledge of Cook's inlet and the Tananah course and watershed, and it is hoped that a party under Lieut. Ray will be sent for the purpose. The party under Lieut. Abercrombie were unable to pass beyond the glacier alleged to obstruct the Copper or Atna river, about sixty miles from the sea. A party under Lieut. Allen left for the Copper river, June 30, and hope to cross the divide between that river and the Yukon basin and descend the latter. Lieut. Stoney is reported to have a new expedition nearly organized to continue his investigations of the Kowak river.

EUROPE.—M. Rabot has explored Lake Enara and the valleys of the Pasvig and Talom, in Finland. The country is an immense forest, with lakes and peat bogs scattered everywhere, and the only means of communication is by rivers which abound in cascades and rapids. Lake Enara, drained by the Pasvig, is a veritable inland sea, with hundreds of islets covered with magnificent pine trees. The country around it, level and little broken, forms a depression between the plateau of Finmark and the hills of Russian Lapland.

GEOLOGY AND PALÆONTOLOGY.

THE ORIGIN OF FRESH-WATER FAUNAS.—Professor W. J. Sollas gives to the world, in No. v, Vol. III, of the Scientific Transactions of the Royal Dublin Society a review of the causes which have originated and limited the fresh-water faunæ of the world. Three causes are admitted as proven: (1) the difference in chemical composition of the medium; (2) the severe character of the fresh-water climate; (3) the necessity for the suppression of a free larval existence. Although the first cause is doubtless a powerful one, it is not sufficient to alone account for the facts, as seems to have been too generally assumed, for in three months Beudant brought several species of marine mollusks to live in fresh water, and, though he failed with three species out of fifteen, it is probable that an unfailing supply of appropriate food and greater slowness in change of medium are the only conditions essential to the success of such experiments. Von Martens (*Ann. and Mag. Nat. History*, 1858) was the first to call attention to the climatic extremes suffered by animals resident in fresh water. Freezing limits them in the colder zones, while, though the populousness of the fresh waters increases towards the tropics, partial desiccation is a hindrance there. Yet, were the want of saltness